



# MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

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The Honorable John M. Spratt  
Chair  
Budget Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

March 5, 2008

**Re: Oppose any amendment that removes funding for the implementation of Executive Order 13166**

Dear Chairman Spratt:

On behalf of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), I strongly urge you to oppose any attempt to cut funding for the implementation of Executive Order 13166. Founded in 1968, MALDEF is a national nonprofit legal organization that uses litigation, policy advocacy, and community education programs to protect and promote Latino civil rights.

The Supreme Court in *Lau v. Nichols* recognized that language is often used as a proxy for national origin discrimination. Executive Order 13166 was enacted to protect against such discrimination. Its intent is to clarify the government's obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Executive Order 13166 does not force any entity or individual to provide translated documents. The removal of funding carries significant implications that will further complicate the ability of agencies to comply with their obligations under the Civil Rights Act.

Rather than roll back critical protections for language minorities, Congress must focus its budget process on providing opportunities to help individuals learn English. There are currently multi-year waitlists around the country for adult ESL. Over 5.5 million limited English proficient children suffer from a lack of resources for a quality education. The budget process must be targeted toward responding to these challenges.

As shown by our record turnout during this primary season, the Latino community is empowered. We strongly oppose demagoguery on the issue of language rights. If Congress is concerned with language acquisition, there are proactive approaches available. Jeopardizing the implementation of Executive Order 13166 is not one of them. MALDEF strongly urges members of the Budget Committee to oppose any amendment to remove funding for Executive Order 13166.

Sincerely,

Peter Zamora  
Washington, D.C. Regional Counsel

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi